

Illinois Early Learning Council Hard to Reach Subcommittee Notes

Thursday, December 6, 2012

Present: Theresa Hawley, Carie Bires, Janice Moenster, Judy Walker-Kendrick, Kathy Stohr, Daniel Fitzgerald, Bob Cammarata, Loukisha Smart-Pennix, Natalie Tucker, Tom Layman, Ireta Gasner, Karen McCarthy, Granada Williams, Choua Vue, Tracy Occomy Crowder, Cerathel Burnett, Bernard Cessarone, Donna Emmons, Vicki Hodges

Characteristics of High Need Communities for Race to the Top

First, big news, Illinois found out this morning that they received the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge (RTT ELC) funds.

Theresa Hawley, from the Office of the Governor, joined us to discuss hard to reach communities and considerations for selecting 6-8 communities around the state to include in the RTT ELC work. Within the RTT ELC proposal, there is about \$5-\$5.5 million set aside to support the highest need communities. The purpose of these funds is to support hard to reach communities as well as learn more on how to support these communities in their systems building in the process. There will be no RFP process, but instead the State will select communities that have some systems and work in place that they can build upon, i.e., communities that can move from good to great. These communities are ones in which there is already some community collaboration and/or community leaders. These are not necessarily communities already receiving other grants. The results from this work will be used to target policy changes.

After this introduction, the subcommittee discussed these topics to advise the RTT ELC selection:

- Most at-risk children are not necessarily in areas of high concentrated poverty because of the push for spreading these communities out. The State needs to also consider how to support children with high needs residing in low need communities.
- There was some push back towards leveraging community collaborations out of a concern that if these collaborations need to support the RTT ELC work they may have less time/money to focus on other needs in the community that were of prior priority. In addition, the subcommittee discussed what we want to see in community strengths, noting the need for leadership to build and sustain the work.
- It was suggested that the State look at the data that supported the space capacity grants to support the community selections. This data provided demographic information and heat maps of areas of concern (e.g., poverty, teen parents, access to programing, etc) that are not receiving services.

For these communities, the State needs communities and systems that are developing or existing because of the limited funds and time from the grant. They want to reach out to hard to reach communities, but they also need communities that are able to change in the grant time frame in order to learn from these communities.

Action item: Within this discussion, members provided some examples of community collaborations and work that may be good candidates for the RTT ELC high needs communities, such as the Family Advocacy Systems and MIECHV. *If you have a model community, please send it to Theresa at:*

Theresa.hawley@illinois.gov

Also, cc or send these communities to Natalie at ntucker@air.org as there is likely to be overlap between RTT ELC communities and the work we are doing on the subcommittee that we would like to document.

Review Categories Table and Why Communities are Hard to Reach

The latest version of the hard to reach communities are in the document *Hard to reach categories and why 12 4 12* that was emailed on December 5th. Since the last meeting, the priority categories have been grouped in general categories, DCFS system, cultural and linguistic factors, and children in the care of relatives. On hold items remain on the third page. Carrie has gone through each of these categories and added reasons why these communities are hard to find/reach/serve for a starting point for the conversation. For next meeting we would like those who are most familiar with working with these communities to expand the reasons with the understanding that we will turn the list deficits around to how the current system is not responsive to the needs of the communities and discuss solutions to these barriers.

The subcommittee discussed the “why they are hard to find/reach/serve” for many of the priority categories:

- Children of teen parents. Members noted that teen parents have a lack of routine and understanding of these services. Within this discussion the subcommittee discussed the need for service providers who can relate to clients and work within the client environment—described below.
- For all categories, the subcommittee discussed the importance for service providers to be able to relate to people in these categories and meet them where they are at to best deliver the services. For example, with teen parents it was noted that oftentimes parents are required to go into a setting to receive services vs. receiving the services in their natural environment.
- The group discussed the balance between life experiences vs. education and stressed the need for continual training of service providers on working with their clients where they are at.
- Children with disabilities/IFSP populations. There was discussion that these two populations do not need to be separated. In addition, it was noted that we do tend to know who these children are and we need to decide what we are measuring (e.g., are they transitioning? Is there service being interrupted) as these children are not necessarily hard to find. One hard to reach population noted within this group was children of families who have requested services, but the child has not qualified to receive services or there are not enough program spots to serve all children. While the child’s needs may not be as severe, there is an expressed need that may not be getting addressed (e.g., programs may have a finite number of spots for children with special needs that are going to the children at greatest risk, but there are children who are eligible with less needs—are we monitoring these children?).
- For all of the hard to reach, we need to know what other committees are doing and how this work may crosscut.

Next Steps

For next meeting, we would like everyone to help expand the table to bring in their expertise. Please email these to Natalie by mid-January so we can add these to the document for the next meeting. Here are the volunteers by topic:

- Granada – Migrant families
- Daniel - DCFS
- Tom – Deep poverty
- Bernard – IECAM data, in general
- Ireta – Will talk with Joyce about doing the cultural/linguistic piece
- Bob – children in special education/EI services
- Loukisha – children of teen parents
- Jannice – children in the care of relatives
- Choua – linguistically isolated

Carie and Natalie will schedule a follow up call with Daniel, Bernard, and Dana Weiner at Northwestern.

Next meeting

- January 24th, 2013
 - 10:00-11:00 Subcommittees
 - 11:00-12:00 Family and Community Engagement Committee
- Illinois Action for Children-Damen Location
- 1340 S. Damen Avenue
- Chicago, IL 60608
- We will discuss solutions to each of the “whys” in the category table